

20 volunteer asks that get a yes

Copy one, change the words in [brackets], send it to one person at a time. A sign-up sheet sent to everyone is addressed to no one: it asks for an open-ended commitment, gives no sense that anyone's particular yes matters, and offers no polite way to decline.

They are grouped by move. Use more than one move in the same message and they get stronger.

1 Make it small, and say where it ends

The hesitation is almost never the task. It is the fear that one yes becomes every yes from now on.

- 1 Not asking for the season. Asking for one Saturday.
- 2 I need someone for one hour on [date], [start time] to [end time]. That is the whole ask.
- 3 Could you [task] for [event] only? Someone else has it after that.
- 4 This is a one time job: [task], about [how long it takes]. Nothing after.

2 Write to one person, by name

A message to everyone asks everyone to opt in. A message to one person asks them.

- 5 You are the calmest person I know under pressure. Check-in table, [day]?
- 6 [Name], you always seem to know everyone. Would you greet new people at the door on [date]?
- 7 I thought of you first for this because [the real reason]. Would you [task] on [date]?

3 Say what does not happen without them

Say it as information, not guilt. Most people do not know the thing does not happen without them.

- 8 Without a second driver we can only take [number] kids. There are [number] signed up.
- 9 If nobody can take [task] by [day], we will [skip it this year / cut it to one table]. I would rather not.
- 10 We need [number] people to run [event] properly. Right now we have [number].

4 Make no an easy answer

An ask with no graceful exit gets silence, because silence is the only polite way to decline.

- 11 Say no and I will not think twice, I am asking six people.

12 Totally fine if this is not a good season for you. Would [date] work, yes or no?

13 If this one is not your thing, is there something smaller you would rather do? [Option] or [option].

5 Ask for what they already do

Some people will never sign up for a role and will happily do the same work slightly on purpose.

14 You take great photos anyway. Would you be our photographer on the [date]?

15 You already [bake for everything / run the group chat / keep the spreadsheet]. Would you do it for [event] too? I will make sure people know it was you.

16 Your [signs / playlist / spreadsheet] last time was the thing people mentioned. Would you do it again?

6 Close the loop after

These are the messages that decide who says yes next season.

17 [Name] ran check-in on [day] and it was the smoothest one we have had.

Public, specific, attached to a name.

18 Thank you for [specific thing] on [day]. [What it made possible, e.g. We got everyone through the door in ten minutes.]

Private, sent the same day.

19 Because [number] of you said yes to [task], we were able to [outcome].

20 Would you do it again next [season / year]? Same job, or tell me if you would rather swap.

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